

VOCATION FOR THE BLIND.

Martha C. Pritchard.

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**M.C. MIGEL LIBRARY  
AMERICAN PRINTING  
HOUSE FOR THE BLIND**



## READERS' OPEN FORUM

### A London Delegate

AT THE CLOSE of the recent A.L.A. Conference in New York, the following letter received by Carl L. Cannon of Yale University Library from Henry J. Brown of London firm of B. F. Stevens and son who was present at the New York Conference:

As I mentioned to you at the New York meeting of the A.L.A., I was interested in hearing the President's remarks during the first meeting of the Association in 1876 and the International meeting in London in 1877. It was, of course, that no American librarian who attended these two meetings had survived to attend the 1937 Conference, but it so happened that I was present at the 1877 meeting in London as my old Chief Mr. B. F. Stevens (with his brother Mr. Henry Stevens) was largely responsible for the organization of the entertainment of the American delegates and I still have a vivid recollection of Dr. W. F. Poole, Justin Gorham, Melville Dewey and other members of the American delegation. It may be of interest to the librarians of the present to examine the handsome volume of *Transactions* in the introduction to which will be found the statement that the format was due to the generosity of B. F. Stevens who was at that time giving the Chiswick Press owing to the death of his father-in-law, Charles Ingham, whose daughter Charlotte married Mr. Stevens, and the delightful head and tail pieces and initial letters were by from her designs of which I possess original sketches."

—HENRY J. BROWN,  
*Stevens and Brown, London.*

### Welcome Wagon

AS A MATTER of constructive suggestion for libraries we submit a method of publicity which, though we consider it originated with us, is by no means patented or copyrighted. It has worked so well in our community where new families—Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Electric etc.—are numerous that we believe it will be equally successful in any other community.

It is operated through the "Welcome Wagon" hostess, a resourceful, capable, courteous woman who keeps in touch with real estate agents, renting offices, etc., visits a newly-arrived family almost as soon as it is settled in new quarters. In a pleasant and friendly manner she gives information as to reliable butchers, bakers, milkmen, laundrymen, and the like. The "Welcome Wagon" is a passenger car bearing in simple lettering the title "Welcome Wagon". For this timely information and

service imparted she is paid by her employers. But for the Library she renders the service without charge, and in actual experience has found newcomers pleased to have the Library called to their attention so promptly and so expeditiously. She fills out the card, authenticating it with her signature. Upon presentation (the signed card must be brought in) it entitles the holder and the members of his family to borrowers' cards.

This publicity method has brought a goodly number of new patrons to the Library soon after their arrival in the community and has given them a definite impression of the desire of the Library to be of service to them.

—FREDERICK EDGERTON,  
*Librarian, New London, Conn.,  
Public Library*

### The Open Shelf System

THE LIBRARY with open shelves is particularly useful to a scientific worker who wishes to find some book that contains certain information or who desires to ascertain whether a result he has obtained is in some book or journal.

This being the case, it is clearly desirable that the open shelf system should be made as effective as possible and that, in particular, the books on the shelf should be supplemented by dummies whenever books are taken out so that the books and dummies will always form a subject index. The writer believes, in fact, that the proper place for a subject index is on the shelves and not in drawers. When the number of cards on any particular subject exceeds a thousand the searching of a card index takes time, especially when the books first selected do not contain the information desired. Each time the searcher returns to the card index his search must begin all over again unless he has left markers to indicate the stage to which his search has already advanced. He may find, too, that another reader is using the index on his return and must await his turn.

When the books themselves form the subject index the search proceeds more rapidly. The reader can pass over a dozen books at a glance and after examining one book and finding that it does not contain the information he desires can quickly pass on to another.

A dummy book might consist simply of a cover with a card envelope pasted on the inside or might be made from two stiff Bond envelopes joined together to form a cover. The advantage of the envelope-cover is that advertisements, reviews and tables of contents from the publishers could be contained in these envelopes.

The time occupied in putting the dum-

mies in place and making up cards for them would not be very great. Cards for a regular subject index need be made only as books are taken out, and after a book has been returned to its place the card in the dummy could be used for a regular subject index or used again when the book is next taken out. The number of covers for dummies need not be very large. If 100 books are taken out of the library each day and about the same number returned, a few hundred covers would be ample. In some cases when a book contains information on several subjects it will be desirable to have dummies of permanent type, each dummy indicating clearly where the actual book is to be found. In such cases the envelope type of dummy will be particularly useful because a table of contents may give the reader the desired information and save him a journey to the shelf containing the actual book. In a large library such a journey may take considerable time.

One objection which has been raised to the open shelf system is that a watcher may be needed at the door to see that no book is removed that has not been borrowed in the usual way. The need of a special watcher has to some extent been eliminated in some libraries by good design. In the new reference library at Manchester (England) the checking desk or desks are at the door and the borrower automatically passes the desk on his way out.

—H. BATEMAN,  
*California Institute of Technology*

### Vocation For The Blind

THE FOLLOWING LETTER sent out in the fall explains itself and as several replies expressed interest in results, they are summarized below.

"A new and unusual situation has come up here by which a supervisor in the Division of Physically Handicapped Children is seeking possibilities for a blind girl, already a college graduate. The question is whether a blind person might not develop into a librarian of a library for the blind where the materials were all in Braille.

"We are writing to ask if you have ever had any contact with such training either directly or indirectly. If so, will you tell us how successfully the under-

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taking progressed and what limitations were found necessary in the complete training."

#### LIBRARY SCHOOLS

Twenty-four schools to whom letters were sent all replied; twenty-two report no experience with blind students in their department. Two (Carnegie and Simmons) report one student each in one or two courses (story telling, children's work, school libraries).

Four reported blind students in the institution with which the library school was connected successfully completing A.B. courses (Louisiana, New Jersey College for Women, North Carolina, and University of Wisconsin).

Three (Carnegie, Pratt, and Simmons) believe a small school cannot give as much individual attention as would be necessary for complete library training of blind students.

One, University of Denver, suggested complete training as impractical but was favorable toward a special course emphasizing books produced in Braille for blind readers.

Two (Hampton and Emporia) suggested private tutoring as a solution.

One, University of Illinois, considered learning through working in a well-organized library for the blind as probably the best method.

One, University of Michigan, suggested a longer time should be allowed than the usual length of the course and emphasized importance of the library school undertaking the training being located in a center where there was a large amount of work for the blind, and therefore where many materials were available in Braille.

A few had refused blind candidates, not feeling prepared to undertake so special a problem with present equipment. Many people raised questions as to placement. Nearly all recognized the advantages of a blind assistant in the library for the blind, although everyone emphasized the need for seeing persons as part of the staff.

Ten schools suggested other sources for information and all possible leads were followed up by sending the same letter as above.

#### PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Cincinnati, Philadelphia, and St. Louis all have, or have had, a blind member on the staff of their library for the blind. They are particularly agreed on the point that it is a great advantage in a department of considerable size to have someone who can work with understanding with blind persons. In the case of St. Louis, where the blind member of the department is the head of it, Dr. Bostwick emphasizes the point that his acquaintance with other blind persons in the city widens the influence of the library so that circulation mounts perceptibly. All of these libraries have seeing employees on the staff who obviously carry on the routine processes.

Miss Goldthwaite of the New York Public Library emphasizes the points at which the blind librarian can be of particular assistance—as an executive, as a demonstrator of reading of Braille, and as a proofreader of Braille material. Operating talking book machines and talking records are also noted by the Philadelphia Free Library. Their blind assistant is a stenographer and her transcription on the typewriter is commended. A further use made of this assistant is that of reading embossed type for those seeing employees of the staff who are not able to use it.

At the Seattle Public Library, the librarian for the blind has worked with a young blind man who uses a room in the library two days a week to teach a class of sighted women volunteers to transcribe Braille. He assists the library in reading Braille letters and in "selecting the right book for a blind person." Several of the members of the University of Washington student body have been blind persons. Two are now preparing for teaching in schools for the blind.

#### GENERAL NOTES

The Library of Congress referred to the National Library for the Blind, 1126 21st St., N. W., Washington, D. C., saying that at the present time the Library of Congress was not in a position to render any assistance in this problem on its own account. The librarian, Mrs. Maude G. Nichols, in charge of the service for the blind, states that owing to the customary detailed records kept by a government institution, it does not seem feasible to employ a blind person in their department with its present physical surroundings.

The director of the National Library for the Blind, Mr. Paul Sperry, writes that all seven of the employees in the library are blind, he, himself, being the only member of the staff who has sight, and all the work is done with Braille. He goes on to say "all the work in the library, except the correspondence, is done by the blind. . . . accurately and expeditiously . . . the blind are helped in library work by their exceptional memories." He thinks his library is the only one where all the work is done by the blind and all the records kept in Braille. The training for his staff has all been done at the library and he adds, "I believe there is a disposition among employees for the blind to employ blind workers so far as their type of work permits. Thus special training for the blind for library work would seem to be desirable."

(1) The final return from this investigation came from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind from which we received a letter from the Chief librarian, who is himself blind. As his letter is valuable as first hand information on this problem, I quote at length from it.

"There is nothing which can pre-

vent a properly qualified and intelligent blind person from discharging duties as head of a library for the blind. This is not to say, however, that it is always best or proper . . . particularly, if the library under his charge be a large one. Be the work large or small, a blind person makes just as efficient an administrator as a sighted person of equal qualifications, but when it is a matter of the actual handling of books, the question of economy in time, effort and money enters prominently into the picture. When I first assumed charge of this library some twenty-three years ago, I was the only employee. I bought the books, accessioned them, mailed them out, received them back, kept all records, attended to correspondence—in short, I was the library factotum. My only difficulty was that of the incoming ink mail. This of course had to be read to me. I carried it home with me every night, took notes of the contents of each letter requiring attention, and attended to the necessary replies the following day. My records were of course all kept in Braille. . . . These records were, however, quite naturally much bulkier than those in ink, and the time required to attend to them as to every other branch of my work, except that of actual typewriting in the department of correspondence, was increased enormously.

"As the extent of library activity increased, I was compelled to employ assistance and for economy's sake in all respects I chose sight rather than blindness. From that moment records were changed from Braille to ink and they have been maintained thus ever since.

"When in Paris a year or two ago, I visited the Library of the Valentin Haüy Association for the Blind, one of the largest collections of embossed books in the world. This library has a circulation of something like 50,000 to 100,000 volumes per year. There is only one sighted employee, a lady who attends to the making out of orders, receipt of goods, etc., etc. All the librarians, of whom there is quite a staff, are blind. But I am convinced that owing to the use of Braille in every department, and the necessarily longer time required to find, ship, receive, record and accession books, as also the ground space required for records—I am convinced, I say, that these considerations reduce the question of economy and ultimate efficiency to a very unsatisfactory solution. However, the point as to whether a blind person of the requisite intelligence can be qualified to carry on the work of a librarian in charge of embossed books is quite fully answered by my own initial experience and by the half-century long practice of the library of the A.V.H. and the other collections of European books for the blind. It is not



a matter of ability but one of ultimate efficiency which is involved. And my own claim is that the proper place for a blind person in a library of embossed work is at the administration desk. Speed, neatness, limited space for records, etc., are all improved when sight, partial or complete, is engaged in the actual carrying on of our library activities on the floor. But the blind librarian, if a properly qualified person can be found, should be in charge of the whole enterprise. . . ."

#### SUMMARY

1. It appears that there are enough positions in libraries in institutions for the blind and in libraries for the blind in association with public or other libraries to warrant the consideration of blind staff members who have had library training.
2. It seems to be true that in institutions for the blind, a larger number of persons who are sightless may be employed on the staff than in public library departments for blind readers.
3. Some evidence points to the advantage of the executive of a library for blind being himself a blind person.
4. It is evidently essential that there should be at least one person with sight on any staff even in libraries of institutions for the blind.
5. It would seem that experience shows that persons to hold any of the above positions should be college graduates who, having demonstrated their ability and persistence through four years of academic training, would be qualified to add the technical knowledge necessary for good library service to their own groups.
6. Experience also seems to prove that at present training for those expecting to work as librarians in this field has been best carried out on the job in some well-organized library with staffs such as they will ultimately join.

—MARTHA C. PRITCHARD,  
New York State College For  
Teachers, Albany, N. Y.

## State Document Notation System

ONE OF THE MOST fascinating pieces of work we have done has been the accumulation of state documents in the fields which are useful to our Technology Department, and one of the most difficult is the location of those documents when wanted by our patrons. So finally, we have taken the bull by the horns and devised (with grateful acknowledgment to the Superintendent of Documents classification) a scheme for their arrangement.

When the Department was new we modestly decided to collect only items from Ohio and its six neighboring states, but somehow or other the patrons insisted on knowing about farming conditions in

the Ozarks, tufa rocks from Florida and the opportunities in the citrus fruit industry in California. The *Agricultural Index* told us that such things were in print, but when it is the shy, wistful patron's first visit to the library one hesitates to tell him to call again in a week or two for the material. So we broadened our base of operations, canvassed thoroughly the list of engineering experiment station publications in the *Engineering Index*; agricultural department, extension service and experiment station publications in *Agricultural Index* and wound up with anything that looked pertinent from the *Monthly List of State Publications*.

Our Technology librarian took a trip to some of the larger libraries around us and soon we were exchanging our duplicates for theirs. The depression hit us and we remained short-handed, so sometimes the job lagged for months, but at last we have made our round of requests to be put on the mailing list. During the last few years we have worked on several schemes for arranging our treasures and now have one which seems to be workable. The scheme is by no means perfect, but if it helps to speed the service as much as the application of the Superintendent of Documents to our Federal documents did, we shall be pleased.

To begin with, we had a complete list of all our state material filed alphabetically by state and department. Then the Catalog Department gave us a list of abbreviations of names of states which they are using. Next we took our list of Ohio documents, which is naturally more complete than for the other states, and assigned arbitrarily a number to each agency from which we receive publications, skipping several numbers between each to allow for new ones which may appear. Using the Ohio list as a base, we assigned numbers to the different agencies of the other states. Of course they do not match up too well since Ohio's is a simple "Agricultural experiment station," and others are "University of something or other, College of Agriculture, Agricultural experiment station," but it was an aid in the spacing of the numbers and, if we ever have a great many more documents from some of these states, we can remember a few series without too much trouble. After assigning a number to each agency we used the .1 for Annual reports; .2 for Unnumbered publications; .3 for Bulletins; and .4 for Circulars with which the federal document classification had made us familiar. Others follow on in alphabetical order.

To give a small example of how the scheme is worked out we have copied the following out of our record:

- OHIO. Agricultural Experiment Station  
o 13.1 Annual report  
o 13.3 Bulletin  
o 13.4 Circular  
o 13.5 Bimonthly bulletin  
o 13.7 Special circular

- OHIO. Dairy and Food Commissioner  
o 19.1 Annual report  
OHIO. Department of Agriculture  
o 22.3 Official bulletin  
OHIO. Department of Agriculture  
Conservation division  
o 25.2 General publications  
o 25.3 Bulletins

The possible misplacing of material on the shelves, with Federal documents, because of the use by both of a letter and number classification, we hope we can overcome by stamping State document plainly just above the number. Of course, this is only a scheme for the arrangement of them on the shelves. To find the subjects we still have to depend on the various indexes. We use pages of high school and junior college age to file and fetch our documents and we hope that this will make it easier for them to locate the material when wanted.

—HOPE PACKARD,  
First Assistant, Technology Department  
Toledo, Ohio, Public Library

## Whitaker Once More

WHITAKER's *Reference Catalogue* is closed for press on July 30 of the year in which it is published. Additions and corrections are accepted up to the end of August. This means that the next edition, which will appear November 30, will be based on the summer lists of the publishers to be represented, combined with their programs of books to be published to the end of December. That next edition, to be dated 1938, will be complete to the end of 1937 so far as 90 per cent of publishers' lists are concerned.

The book is sold chiefly to booksellers, and they are aware of these limitations. Librarians in the United States should keep these facts in mind when consulting Whitaker. To be on the safe side the dead line should be considered as October first. Any book published up to that date should be found, provided that it is still in print and also that the publisher is included. This second point can readily be checked with the list in the front of the volume. In order to secure a complete picture to the end of 1937 the *Reference Catalogue* should be used together with Whitaker's *Cumulative Book List*, and *The Book-seller*, or *The Publishers' Circular*.

—LAWRENCE HEYL,  
Chairman, A.L.A.  
Book-buying Committee

## \$300,000 College Library

THE COLLEGE of New Rochelle, N. Y., filed plans on July 1 with the New Rochelle Building Department for a \$300,000 library to be built at Castle Place and Leland Avenue, adjoining other college buildings. The library will be two stories high and have a tower.



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